

FreeThought

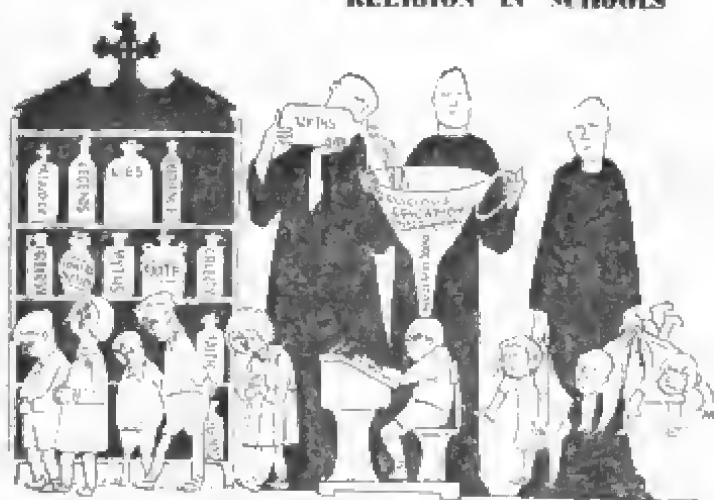
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RELIGION IN SCHOOLS



VICTIMS OF OUR 'SECULAR' EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM'

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REASON THINKS: RELIGION DREAMS

Letters . . .

Sir

There was an interesting (and amusing too, write up with the above caption on 'Mataji' Nirmala Devi of Bombay in the March 25 issue of the Illustrated Weekly of India

Blessed indeed is our land where "Moksha, Nirvana or Superconsciousness can be bought over the counter" and a concoction of supreme spiritual bliss is being served, like the popular instant beverages (Nescafe, Bru etc.) by our Babas and Matajis. But it is amusing to find each 'God' or god (wo)man deriding every other specimen of the kind.

As one interested in applying science to mysticism, I have a working suggestion to offer in order to trigger off the arousal of the much spoken of "Kundalini" among the aspirants en masse with least expense of time and money. Let us organise a huge gathering of our 'Gods' god (wo)men, and their devotees (who are obsessed with Kundalini arousal). In that spiritual sammelan we shall supply a pair of electrodes from a powerful d.c. electric power generator to each aspirant and place one of the electrodes at the base of the spine (unla dhara) and the other oppositely charged electrode at the top of the head (sahasrara). When a powerful current is passed across the electrodes, surely the wonderful Kundalini cannot help herself being aroused and pierce the fontanel bone. Thus, instant moksha is guaranteed enmasse for thousands of aspirants. Even before each neo-mystic feels 'the coolness of the divine breeze fitting his upturned palms' (vouchsafed by Mataji Nirmala Devi) he will have attained "vidheha mukti" - instant moksha through death. Safer indeed will be the world then for the remaining worldly mortals to live in.

— Balachandra Rao, Bangalore

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Religionists and godmen say that religion and science co-exist; religion is founded according to science and science has emerged from Vedas

But really religion is opposed to science.

Religionist concocts imaginary reasons to establish that religion is consistent with science as our central government gives the meaning for Secular Government

An educated man studies in science that solar or lunar eclipse occurs while the three planets, the earth, the moon and the sun are in a straight line. The shadow of the earth or the moon falls on the moon and the sun respectively once in a year. In certain years there will be total or partial eclipses. At times the eclipse will not be visible in India.

But a religionist believes that Rahu and Ketu the Puranic serpents hide the moon to take revenge upon it. The religionists do rituals and mantras to pacify the trouble caused to the moon by the serpents.

Is this act of astrological or puranic performance consonant with science in any way? Not at all! And, Religionists say that god made all the things in the world. He created all the living beings including humans.

But science says that all the things, animals and other living beings are created by the synthesis of molecules and chemical changes. Man is formed by the theory of evolution according to Darwin.

Does this theory go in line with the religious one above? No. To eke out their livelihood with no labour the religionists concoct things in the name of god and fate and lead a joyous life by fooling the gullible masses.

We can give numerous examples to support the fact that Religion is diametrically opposed to Science

— Vi. Po. Pazhanivelanar

Thiruthuraiipoondi

INVERSE RATIO

"Civilization increases as religion decreases."

—Russel.

Free thought

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Perhaps, man has not known anything more exciting than to be a child in this last quarter of the twentieth century. They do not have to rely on fairy tales to get out of their routine. There is the rocket soaring high, satellites circling the earth, men landing on the moon, scientific instruments exploring the distant planets, deep-sea divers unfathoming the mysteries of the oceans, geologists exploring the earth's underground, anthropologists taking us back millions of years, gynaecologists fertilising the human egg in a test tube, biologists nearing success in manipulating the genes, biochemists trying to make prototypes of human cells, conventional diseases being almost totally eradicated, food supply being multiplied beyond our wildest imagination, TVs and telephones informing us instantly of the happenings in any part of the globe, and transport speed being faster than the speed of sound. Everyday something new, something exciting. Human beings have entered an era of unbelievable knowledge. Truth is stranger than fiction!

Our next generation cannot rely on the past for reaping the fruits of science and technology. Old myths have been exploded. The splitting of the atom has put us in possession of fantastic energy. Children! You are inheriting the best product of human efforts. You are bound to survive and succeed, any other course is suicidal.

The future is bound to register greater achievements. If economic exploitation and disparity are abolished, if birth ceases to

(Continued in Page No. 254)



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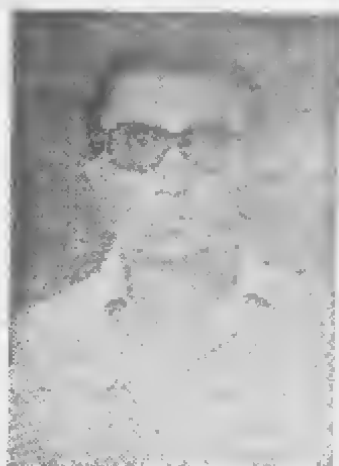
Editor
C. A. SESHADRI

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

International Year of the Child

Human race is hoaxed into believing since ages that the Child is the Father of Man. But, the Man has always remained and played the role of Father of the poor Child.

Hence, if at all the International year of the Child is to be celebrated or observed, very honestly and sincerely, bereft of hypocritic fanfare, the Child should be liberated from the bondage of Indoctrination and imposition of the traditional unscientific superstitious views of the parents and the society.



If I mistake not, Bernard Shaw had said that the human being is able to think independently himself only after attaining the age of forty. Even if that age be disputable, any discerning person will not be able to disagree with the fact that a human being does not acquire capability to think independently and decide for himself anything till after five years of his or her attaining puberty.

That being so, the Child is indoctrinated compulsorily by the questionable and doubtful religious and social views, which get stratified in the child's mind by environmental conditioning.

Nevertheless, this liberation of the Child can not be conceived by or expected of the promoters and propagators of the scheme, as they themselves have grown and been brought up in the same environment of the indoctrination from childhood and therefore, their minds are so conditioned that they can not now shed their shackles of age old beliefs and think of liberating the Child from indoctrination of views by parents and the Society.

Hence, they with eclat and fanfare pretend to celebrate the International year of the Child, either to propitiate their ego or to gain lime-light or to perpetuate their social and political image and to enhance it, which in fact does not solve the basic problem, but serves the purpose of throwing a few crumbs to a few of the multitudes of ill-fed, ill-nurtured, ill-dressed children all over the so called free world.

That being the outcome of the politico-economic system prevalent in those countries, the problem of deprivation of the Children can be solved by outright change in that system, as has been done in socialist countries, which constitute more than one third portion of the world.

Hence, conscientious persons all over the world should raise their timely voice to call upon the promoters and perpetrators of the International Year of the Child to halt their hoax and instead plan a programme to liberate the Child from indoctrination and imposition of traditional illusory beliefs about so called god and the religion woven around it, which has given birth to the nonsensical myths of the existence of soul independent of the human body and life after death etc.

—Y. A. LOKHANDWALA.

Readers' Forum

SECULARISM IN THE CENTRE AND THE STATES

Mr. Kuldip Nayar's report (Indian Express May 31) that the States turn a deaf ear to Delhi advice on secularism, hardly evokes any surprise, for the simple reason that the centre is itself not trying to be secular. Little or no attention has been paid to eradicate superstition and create a scientific attitude among the people. The ban on slaughter of non-milch cows is an unsecular action and when the Kerala and Bengal governments wish to be strictly secular on this issue, the Centre is trying to penalise them and in the process make a mockery of State autonomy. The hypocrisy about cow protection and goshalas in a country where the cattle are the worst in health and treatment and where even pious Hindus quietly and in secret sell away old and useless cows, and where cow slaughter does take place everywhere on the sly, is sought to be glorified. The principle of the autonomy of the States and the cattle economics are of less importance to the Central Govt. than bowing to the Brahmanic religious propaganda of the RSS and the coercion of the Paunar saint. Extra-constitutional authority centred in a religious ashram is itself unsecular and undemocratic.

Pictures of Hindu gods abound in the Central Government offices and the factories offending the sentiments of non-Hindu employees and rationalists. The cashier's room in particular has become almost a temple where idols are kept and weekly poojas are made with prasadam and prayers. Hindu religious ceremonies at public functions, secret consultations with astrologers, and frequent visits of Central ministers to temples and ashrams smack of partisanship.

Out of the ten big states listed by Mr. Kuldip Nayar as prone to communal riots, Tamilnadu is conspicuous by its absence. This is because there has been sufficient rationalist propaganda by Periyar EVR and his followers against all religions and superstitions. The atrocities against Harijans have been there but are very few. The D.K., D.M.K. and the ADMK, have never been known to harbour any kind of anti-Muslim feelings and there are thousands of Muslims in these associations. Though the D.K. is alleged to be anti Brahmanic, there has never been any open physical attacks on the Brahmins. Periyar took the greatest care to preach non-violence and reliance on propaganda and persuasion to generate self-respect and rationalism among the people.

If some of the States are actually acting against secularism, as alleged by Mr. Kuldip Nayar, it is because the people of those States are so backward in thinking so fanatic about religious practices and processions and so ignorant of superstitions that they cannot help influencing the administrative machinery. More often the minions of law and order are themselves so much victims to fanaticism and super-

stitution that they either connive at aggression or delay action on rioters until the worst is done. In British days, the Muslim used to first take aggressive steps over a little street fracas and by time the Hindus organised themselves to retaliate, the police would be on the scene to round up the retaliators or start firing. The position appears to have been reversed in free India and the communalists in both camps are not a little responsible for the consequences.

The solution does not lie in, as suggested, in restricting arms licenses, posting of officers of proven ability and impartiality at sensitive centres, close vigilance over communal violence and communal press, imposition of collective fines and strengthening the machinery for vigilance and intelligence. The States obviously could not act on these guidelines of the Centre either because they are impracticable or because they are costly requiring more policemen of the right type or because the people are too backward and fanatic to be corrected.

The solution lies in rationalist propaganda to enlighten the people on the superstitions in religion, the dangers of fanaticism, the obsolescence of obscurantism and the uselessness of most of our religious festivals and processions. The people must be made to realise that no god of any community or religion has ever come to rescue them when they are in a communal holocaust. Religious wars and conflicts have been going on for millenniums with no avatar coming to restore peace and amity. Public exhibition of religious activities must be banned and all religious processions must

be limited exclusively inhabited by the particular creed. Drill and militant exercises restricted to one community must be banned and in its place secular scouts representative of all religions and castes roughly in proportion to their numerical strength in the population, formed either by govt. or private secular agencies.

Further people must be discouraged from carrying or wearing peculiar religious or caste symbols that divide and discriminate like the cross thread, and shaven head and beard of the orthodox muslims. More and more films decrying religious fanaticism, obscurantist practices, useless orthodox habits, peculiar separatist dresses, must be produced. Films encouraging inter-caste, inter-religious, and inter-provincial marriages must also be produced. There have been a few on these lines, but they are not enough. Inter-religious dining must be arranged in trouble prone areas. All these will make people less religious but more spiritual and philosophical.

It is heart-rending to see the Central and State governments wasting their time, energy and money on non-issues of no national or economic importance. Very rightly a Janata M.P. resigned from the party on the ground that he was disgusted to find the party engaging itself in such silly non-issues like cow protection, imposition of Hindi, and the fad about prohibition. In these circumstances, the advice to the Centre complaining about States' unsecular activities, is to say, 'Physician heal thyself first'.

— Prof. A. M. Dharmalingam

NEWS AND NOTES

ANDHRA PRADESH RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION

At the Committee Meeting of West Godavari Branch of A. P. Rationalist Association held on 17-6-79, the following office bearers and Committee Members have been newly elected :

Secretary	... Mr. S. R. Suri
Jt. Secretary	... Mr. M. Sambasiva Rao
Treasurer	... Mr. A. L. Nara- yana
Committee Members	... Mr. T. V. Ragha- vaiah Ms. S. Indira

The other office bearers namely Mr. D. Ravi Kumar (Hon. President) Mr. M. V. Reddy, President and other Committee Members, Mr. Yagati Kanaka Rao, Mr. Pinninti Appala Raju, Mr. G. Venkateswara Rao and Mr. Kaliseti Papa Rao continue to be in the Committee.

NELLORE DISTRICT RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION FORMED

The Nellore District Rationalist Association was formed at a meeting held on 8-7-79 at Nellore. The meeting was presided over by Mr. K. Vasudeva Rao.

At the outset, Mr. P. Bhemannna, Convener explained the objects and the need for forming a District Rationalist Association as desired by the A. P. State Rationalist Conference held in May 79.

At the General Body meeting the following office Bearers were elected :

President :	Dr. E. Rajagopala Reddy, M. B. B. S.,
Vice-President :	Mr. G. Vasudeva Rao
Secretary :	Mr. P. Bhemannna
Jt. Secretary :	Mr. J. Markendeyulu
Treasurer :	Mr. Ch. Radhakrishna- murthi

Executive Committee : Messrs. C. Krishnamohan, J. Sanjivi, B. V. Prasad, J. Sanjiva Rao, B. Venkata Subbajah, K. Sairamaiah, B. Sitarama Singh, T. Sukumar Reddy, S. Chinnayya, Ch. Ajoy Ghosh, Y. Srinivasulu, G. Aravinda Babu, G. Adi Seshaiyah, V. Venkateswara Rao, V. Sivakota Reddy, P. Ramachandra Reddy, R. Bhaskara Reddy, V. Chanchajah, Sheik Sattar Saheb, Sheik Sa Basha, K. Tirupalu and Ms. Annapurna.

The Meeting passed resolutions condoling the death of Dr. Kovoor, appealing to Central and State Governments to enact uniform Civil Code, not to ban cow

slaughter, to stop religious propaganda over AIR, T. V. etc. deleting religious lessons from Text Books, to abolish Model Schools run by A. P. Govt. promoting the interests of Saibaba etc.

* * * * *

KERALA RATIONALISTS CONFERENCE

Kerala Yukthivadi Sangham State Committee has decided to conduct the VI Annual Convention of the Kerala Yukthivadi Sangham on September 8th and 9th at Calicut.

This convention will take certain far-reaching steps to tackle the problem of casteism and communalism. The formation of a united front in the cultural field including politicians, social workers and literary writers etc. will be given priority in agenda to be discussed.

Another session of the convention will deal with the contributions of the great rationalist Thanthai Periyar Ramaswami Naicker to the advancement of a secular and humanist society.

The State Committee held under the Chairmanship of Com. Pavanam decided to invite the following eminent rationalists and political leaders to attend the convention. Mr. EMS Namboodripad, Mr. C. Achutha Menon, Mr. Manoharan (Tamilnadu Minister), Prof. Lokhandwala (President, IRA), Prof. Dharmalingam (President, Karnataka Rationalist Association) Ad. Chenthamarai, M. P. Veerendra Kumar, Arengil Sreedharan, Sachithanandam, P. Govinda Pillai etc.

We appeal to the rationalists of other states to co-operate with our function with all means to make it a grand success.

—U. Kalanathan, Gen Secretary
KRA, Kerala

SKYLAB EXPOSES CLAIMS OF 'PSYCHOKINESIS'

Massachusetts U.S.A. : A radio audience estimated at 12m. listeners was called on to use "mental energy" to push the Skylab Space Station into a higher orbit and prevent it's crashing to earth. But according to NASA the 64-tonne craft continued to fall. It finally crashed into the earth on 12th July, scattering debris.

The appeal for listeners to send out mental energy to keep Skylab aloft was sent out by Mr. Chris Kilhan, a yoga therapist at the Psychoneurologics Institute in Massachusetts. Twelve other meditators gathered here to support his own efforts. "We are with millions of minds focussing on Skylab," intoned Kilhan.

The institute is a holistic healing centre, and participants say they use meditation, psychic energy, massage and diet rather than medicine to cure ills. The group hoped that mass meditation would keep Skylab from falling through psychokinesis, or the ability to move physical objects through mental energy.

The 10-minute appeal was relayed over 42 radio stations around the U.S.A. Stations in England, Australia and Canada had similar broadcasts, said Mike Harvey, a station spokesman.

Kilhan and a psychologist and physicist named Payne, directed meditators to focus on the spacecraft. This mental energy would

"push it into a higher, safer, orbit," they claimed.

"As we use our mental energy, Skylab is going higher," Kilhan told fellow-meditators. "Millions of minds are now pushing it higher. Our minds are generating enough power to push it up."

And of course the Skylab fell! 'Psychokinesis' was exposed again!

BRUTAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN

One child a day dies in England as a result of sadistic treatment by parents. The fact was made evident by a sociological survey the results of which were made public on the eve of the new year that has been proclaimed the International Year of the Child. The survey made use of solely English statistics and says that every year about 40,000 English youngsters receive heavy injuries as a result of beatings. Moreover, the number of cases of parental cruelty are steadily increasing over the last years.

—Sovetskaya Rossiya.

HOW MANY STARS ARE THERE IN THE SKY?

The astronomy laboratory of the Kiev State University named after Taras Shevchenko is completing a new catalogue of the stars of Magnitude 6, i.e. stars seen with the naked eye.

The first international catalogue used by astronomers the world over includes 6 653 stars. But these stars keep moving, which prompted scientists to specify their coordinates and, in the bargain, count them again. This is of both scientific and practical significance.

Of course such stellar findings are out of the realm of our B. V. Ramans and their tribe making their livelihood on astrology who

still refuse to think that the Sun is a star, but call it a 'graha' or planet.

BOY YOKED TO CART, BECOMES A CRIPPLE

The Hyderabad branch of the Indian Women Scientists Association has condemned the action of a landlord in Mahabubnagar district who yoked his servant boy aged 11 to a bullock cart. As a result, the spinal cord of the boy broke and he became a cripple. He is now undergoing treatment at the Osmania General Hospital.

A resolution adopted by the association said the Minister for Women and Child Welfare, in sponsoring the treatment of the boy, Ramulu, without taking steps against those responsible for forcing Ramulu to haul a load of logs in a cart, was only distracting public attention from the inhuman act.

—From 'The Hindu'

The inhuman landlord should not be left unpunished for his heinous crime. But then shouldn't we ban our epics which have many such instances of cruelty to children? In one case a parent made a meal of his own son to feed a sadhu!

GOD PUNISHES THE FAITHFUL

Four women, including an assistant headmistress and a teacher of a city girls' school, were killed and four others seriously injured in a tanker-car-ven collision near Sriperumbudur on the Madras-Bangalore Road on Saturday morning.

The victims were among a party of 22 staff members of the Lady M. Ct. Muthiah Chettiar Girls' High School, Purasawalkum, who were going to Kancheepuram to have darshan of Lord Athi Varadar in the Varadarajaswami temple.

—From 'The Hindu'

OBITUARY

Mr. C. T. DARU IS DEAD

Mr. Chendrekant Daru, an eminent Advocate, a well-known rationalist and humanist, and an indefatigable fighter for the cause of human freedom died in Los Angeles on 15th May 1979.

For sometime past Mr. Daru was suffering from lung cancer and had gone to United States for treatment.

Born in Chhotaudepur he had his college education from Baroda College. Even in his college days he was a rebel and iconoclast and a free thinker and came under the influence of the great intellectual and radical humanist Mr. M. N. Roy.

He plunged into public life in his early days. He shunned party politics, committed as he was to the humanist values of freedom, rationalism and co-operation. He was a Secretary of the Radical Humanist Association of India.

After the establishment of the Gujarat High Court, he started legal practice and soon distinguished himself as a top ranking constitutional expert.

His love for freedom and humanist values found its highest fulfilment when he successfully defended BHUMIPURA and SADHANA against the repressive censorship laws during emergency.

His life was an unceasing relentless battle against the forces of irrationalism, communalism, obscurantism, repressive social and religious customs and superstition. Mr. Daru took up the cause of religious freedom among the Dawoodi Boharas at great personal risk and as an active Member-Secretary of the Nathwani Commission made a significant contribution to the preparation of the Report, the draft of which he completed a few days before his departure for United States.

In the death of Mr. Daru, the people of Gujarat and the whole country have lost an original thinker, a champion of human

liberty, a great humanist and a dauntless fighter for the causes of common man.

* * *

LATE SHRI DASHRATHLAL THAKER

Shri Dashrathlal Thaker is no more with us.

He breathed his last on 19th May 1979.

Shri Thaker was a great humanist, relentless fighter for freedom and liberty and gave his life for the cause of working class, the poor the down-trodden and the underprivileged.

He was born at Borsad (Gujarat) on 2nd October 1911. In his youth he came in contact with the civil disobedience movement; he was jailed for six months in 1931.

While in jail, he came across the writings of Shri MN Roy. He came in contact with Shri Tatyab Sheikh, a close associate of Shri Roy.

Shri Thaker met Daru in 1934 and soon found in him a great friend and the friendship and comradeship between the two came to last for their entire life. In fact Dashrathlal out lived Daru who died on 15th May by only four days dying of a heart attack on 19th May, 1979.

He actively participated in editing "Swatantra Bharat" a Gujarati Daily against heavy odds. He was also the Secretary of Radical Humanist Association.

His contribution to the cause of Radical Humanist Movement and Labour Movement in Gujarat has been monumental and unique and the void created by his death can not be easily filled.

The Humanist Movement has lost in him a devoted, silent and selfless worker and Democracy a relentless fighter for freedom and higher values in life.

Six Gifts for Your Children

—by *Margaret Shetty*

Recently I was asked by a magazine for women to write an article relevant to the International Year of the Child. The assignment particularly intrigued me as a parent, teacher and writer for children. No other aspect of my life has presented me with greater challenges, nor posed more difficult dilemmas than my responsibility for young minds.

If it were possible to "gift" one's children with certain qualities which would you choose in order to make them strong? Hope, Enthusiasm, Self-confidence, Respect, and Resilience would feature on most parents' lists. But being an atheist means having a different commitment. And here it is that some of the "gifts" I choose might appear downright dangerous to conventional-minded parents. These are the six I have on my list.

1. COMPASSION

All religions preach compassion; but in practise it turns out that loving thy neighbour

as thyself usually means loving only those belonging to one's own community. Children make no such distinctions between people and people—until they are taught.

When parents nurture compassion in the home through an unprejudiced concern for all those who are less fortunate, they reinforce their children's natural generosity of spirit. But bigotry begins where they mark off particular areas for their charity and refuse to recognise any need which falls outside that limit. Charity is one of the easiest things in the world which is why all religions make a virtue of it. When it is practised in order to acquire merit or secure eternal life it becomes a cynical exercise. Such charity is nothing but calculated callousness—a characteristic of most Indian religions. Compassion goes beyond charity. It doesn't make a demand on one's material means, it demands of oneself.

2. OPTIMISM

I prefer this to Hope. As an unfulfilled expectation, Hope appears to me almost religious in its character. I can admire the single-minded tenacity of the hopeful; but I find myself more comfortable with the optimistic. Optimism is more evenly spread. It also takes in two other essentials: a sense of humour and enthusiasm.

Psychologists find that parents who can laugh at themselves before their children have warmer relationships with them than those who are stuffily conventional. Humour in itself is highly contagious. Children then learn to be amusing themselves, and by laughing at their own follies, acquire an emotional resilience.

Interestingly, none of the world's dictators, tyrants, bigots, religious fanatics and zealots ever mastered the fine art of laughing at themselves. If they had they wouldn't have become what they did. They might have better understood the limits of human folly.

Too early in life we stifle our children's spirits with weighty ideas about "goodness" and "badness", the do's and don'ts of social conventions, and the absolute necessity of being virtuous in order to please God. Humour always offers them a subtle escape.

Why do children laugh when a pompous and pious person who has just lectured them soundly sits down on a chair that isn't there? Not only because pedantry and pomposity have been successfully deflated by the law of gravity, but because the accident to the man makes them feel more equal with him. He is human after all—like themselves. Indeed, they would certainly like him better if only he would also recognise this significant fact himself.

The trouble with us adults is that we try too hard all the time at being adults. And we expect children to follow our example. "Absolute seriousness is a sign of effort, and effort is a sign of imperfect masters," wrote one author. Children who are taught to handle ideas lightly, learn to use them with mastery. This is a paradox which our educational system hasn't yet discovered.

Enthusiasm goes with a sense of humour. It is also a natural ingredient of youth. Yet how fragile a thing enthusiasm is! Sheer elation or scorn an enthusiastic child and its spirit wilts visibly. Self-righteous adults do this

all the time. They do it to prove that they are bigger and know it all.

SELF-RELIANCE

In childhood no other emotion is more destructive of the spirit than fear—fear of punishment and adult wrath, fear that God will find out, fear of failure at school, and much else. Such fear is engendered in children when parents are over-strict, over-exacting and over-protective.

The entire process of growing up then appears like a very risky business. Learning produces a shattering list of failures. Fear intimidates, and this feeling of intimidation accounts for their failure as adults. Everything and everyone will always appear bigger and better than themselves.

Religious Induction is based on fear. It plays on children's natural fear of the Unknown. It also plays on their need to have someone close by who is kindly and protective and will help them out of trouble if they pray to Him. Here fear becomes a "safe" feeling. They are told it is not only necessary but advisable to fear God. By fearing God they will remain good, and win attractive rewards.

"To allow oneself to entertain pleasant beliefs as a means of avoiding fear is not to live in the best way," wrote Russell. "In so far as religion makes its appeal to fear, it is lowering to human dignity."

And again, in *Bertrand Russell Speaks his Mind*: "I say people who feel they must have a faith or religion in order to face life are showing a kind of cowardice which

in any other sphere would be considered contemptible. But when it is in the religious sphere, it is thought admirable. I cannot admire cowardice whatever sphere it is in."

Understanding parents can foster a spirit of experiment by refusing to intimidate their children through fear. They should not blame, punish or censure in the event of failure. Instead of urging them on with cosy ideas that if they pray to God they will succeed, they need to be taught how to make the best possible use of their resources and talents to develop self-sufficiency. Risking failure, and learning to live with it, is all part of the process of achieving self-reliance.

4. SPIRIT OF FREE INQUIRY

Parents contaminate children with their own bigotry and prejudice. They do it by precept and example. They do it in the name of fossilised traditions and dated beliefs. "Tradition means giving votes to that obscurest of all classes—our ancestors," wrote G. K. Chesterton. "It is the democracy of the dead."

Ironically, human progress has been achieved by forcing tradition to yield, step by step. Today it is in areas where rigid attitudes and religious bigotry prevail that we witness the harshest inhumanity of man to man. Each religion insists it alone has the truth. By logic only one can be true. Which is it? "Ours, of course!" is the reply. But religion goes by accident of birth and not by its truthfulness. Few people are prepared to see that all religions and the cultures they support are not based on truth at all—they are based on faith.

Children readily appreciate the fact that others also have workable cultural systems like their own, without worrying about which is right and which is wrong. But when they become contaminated with adult prejudice they begin to see their own culture as the "truth" and all others as aberrations of the truth.

Children, like adults, have a right to freedom of conscience. This they can work towards through free inquiry. But few parents have the imagination or courage to say to them: "This is our belief. You must find yours for yourself. Search in all religions search in belief and unbelief, and then make your own choices."

I know a family in which the husband is a Muslim, his wife Hindu and their teenage daughter chose to turn Christian. They didn't see these differences as cause for friction because they respected each other's point of view.

A free and inquiring mind is an open mind. It is also a reasonable mind. The present world staggers under a welter of fanaticisms which have dangerously infected international politics. Perhaps in this International Year of the Child, we adults need to ponder that our children's capacity for being reasonable might some day decide the very survival of humans as a species.

5. COURAGE TO BE DIFFERENT

Convention is comfortable and conformity is safe. The earliest lessons children learn are to behave, act and appear like the rest. If they don't, people will laugh.

Herd pressures produce timid people. It takes courage to be different. But being

different doesn't mean dropping out, opting out, or turning in as youth movements in the West suggest. It means fearlessly moving ahead of the rest. Being different means beating out one's own path without destroying worthwhile values. A glance at the lives of the world's greatest men and women reveals this interesting fact: they all had the courage to be different. Their contemporaries described them as eccentric, but that didn't deter them.

Parents impose their own conventions on children. But there are surely a hundred different view-points to each and every problem. To think the unthinkable takes courage. It means running the risk of being laughed at. "One of the strongest characteristics of genius is the power to light its own fire," wrote Dr. Ari Kiev. Every child comes in with this self-actuating fire-until parents smother it.

6. SELF-DETERMINATION :

Stupidly religions and social conventions have dictated that we draw a line down the middle of humankind and divide it into two unequal parts-male and female. Through centuries of sexual stereotyping we have almost lost sight of the fact that men and women share a common humanity.

The feminist movement has forced people to take another look at sexual values based on spurious biological data. Atheists who reject outright the myths of male-oriented religions have recognised the reality of sexual equality. But in a regimented society such as ours it is almost inevitable that we find ourselves subscribing to values which confirm inequality. Our children's textbooks

are heavily sexist and our educational system geared to giving boys preference in matters of choice. What are your sexual attitudes? Do they reinforce the superiority of your sons, and encourage passivity and non-achievement in your daughters?

The children of today have better opportunities for self-determination than our generation ever had. But they cannot hope to realise themselves if they are prevented by stereotyped thinking in their parents.

We need to encourage our children to light their own fires and actuate themselves. They have a right to pursue their own beliefs, goals and ambitions without fear of failure, and without censure or criticism from their parents. They will find peace, fulfillment and self-realisation if they are allowed to set their own terms of reference against what they think and feel as individuals.

THE SUPERIOR POWER

Teacher: "Today's lesson teaches us about the influence of kings and queens. But there is a superior power. Who can tell me what it is?"

Johnny: "Aces Sir."

—Courtesy: *Capper's weekly*.

Catch 'Em Young

—R. Lakshminarayanan, Bangalore

(We appreciate the concern expressed in the article. We request the National-Council for Educational Research and Training, New Delhi to keep in mind the rights of the growing number of atheist children to be educated without theological brain washing. We request NCERT to direct text book authors to keep canvassing for God out of text books." —Ed.)

My son Shyamal, 6½ years old, is in the second standard at school. He goes to Kendriya Vidyalaya, Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore.

The book prescribed for Social studies this year is Prarambik Samajic Adhyayan, part 2, authored by J. Fuste, Dy. Secretary, Council for Indian School Certificate Education, New Delhi, translated into Hindi by J. K. Bhatnagar, formerly Head of the Social Studies Department, Happy Higher Secondary School, New Delhi. The book is published by Pitambar Book Depot, New Delhi.

Lesson 3 in the book is about Puja Ke Sthan or places of worship. It begins like this:

Ham ghar par puja karna seekhte hain. (We learn to worship at home). Hamara mata-pita hamen bhagwan ke puja karna sikhate hain. (Our parents teach us to worship god).

Now I, a militant atheist, do not teach my sons any form of worship. Although my wife Sarasvathy believes in God, she desists from teaching my two sons any form of worship. (My elder son Sanjay, 11 years old, is in the sixth standard in the same school).

The lesson in question raises a serious issue: Don't we atheists have a right to bring up our children as atheists without interference from the school? How can Mr. Fuste, a sociologist, assume that all parents teach their children to worship god?

But the reverend Fuste has lofty intentions! He wants to inculcate catholicism or tolerance in his children. The lesson continues:

Log alag-alag dhangon se uski puja karte hain. (People worship god in different ways). Bhagwan ek hai, parantu log uski puja anak dhang se karte hain. (God is one, but people worship him in several ways).

"God is one" is progressive view for our rulers and saint-politicians. "Tolerance" based on a falsehood (that there is a god) can never endure. In practice "one god" is bound to degenerate into a Hindu god, a Muslim god, A christian god etc. "Ishwar-Allah ek hai" is old hat and has been tried by Akbar, Kabir, Guru Nanak, Gandhi and many others. Has this gambit ever stopped communal violence?

"All religions are equally good" is a pious humbug acceptable to the more progressive religious people. If religious people were really convinced about it, we should be seeing Hindus doing "Namaz" in Mosques. Why are the muslims not allowed into Hindu temples? The truth is: All religions are equally bad, because of the different ways of life that religious practice entails.

"Ishwar-Allah ek hai" is only a sop to fanaticism. It does not stop latent fanaticism from flaring up at the slightest provoca-

tion. The motivation of catholic theism is to maintain status quo. It does not involve any change in the way of life for the adherents of ishwar and allah. But becoming an atheist necessarily involves a change in the way of life and hence a change in attitudes. Atheism is therefore more conducive to communal harmony than catholic theism. "No god" can be more unifying than "one god."

However let us go on with Mr. Fuste's lesson in catholicism. 'Har besti men puja ke sthan hote hain.' (There are places of worship in every residential area). 'Log vahan jakar puja karte hain.' (People go there and worship).

Innocuous statements indeed. But what is my atheist child to make of them? Is he to be brow-beaten by the theist text-book writer and, most likely, the theist teacher, into accepting a second-class citizenship?

The infantile sociology continues: Puja ke sthan bahut purane hain. (Places of worship are very old).

That is perhaps true of one in a thousand temples. Of course the infants can gulp whatever is fed to them even falsehood!

Ye bhagwan ka adar karna ke liye banaye gaye te. (They were built to honour god).

More often than not they were built up by zamindars, rajahs or feudal lords in their own honour.

Anya deshon ke log in sthanon ki prashansa karte hain. (People of other countries praise these places of worship).

The foreign applause syndrome! Anything is good, if tourists appreciate it!

Ham bhagwan ki puja karte hain, isliye ki vah mahar hai. (We worship god because he is great). Now the theist author shows his true colours. Ham usko dhanyavadi dete

hain, kyonki uski ham par badi krupa hai. (We thank him because he is merciful).

Ham usse vandan mangte hain kyonki vah sarvashaktiman hai. (We ask him for favours because he is all powerful).

BULLSHIT, Mr. Fuste. I shall teach my sons to depend on themselves and not on a non-existent god.

Mr. Fuste's lesson in catholicism is followed by exercises, all of which assume that my son worships the one non-existent god in a particular way. He would be a good citizen, if he learned to be tolerant of other ways of worshipping the god.

All this stems from the peculiar concept of secularism that our rulers are bent upon propagating. Secularism that stops at tolerance of all religions is tantamount to applying the brakes on the philosophical development of the people. If you ensure status quo in philosophy, you ensure status quo in politics and economics. That suits our rulers to a Tee.

The point is this, Mr. Fuste: Catholicism is better than religious bigotry. But atheism is even better. I protest against this blatant attempt to brainwash my children with theological nonsense in the guise of catholicism and social studies.



A MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION

Would a real god have permitted in the past, or would he permit now, billions of the people's wealth to be squandered in the erection of monster religious structures for false gods, while at the same time millions of his subjects were starving to death?



U.K. School Children and God

[The following is an extract from an article "Rationally speaking" by Nicolas Walter (published in February 79 issue of New Humanist published by the Rationalist Press Association, London) which may give readers an idea of the views of future generations of Indians —Ed.]

Since I mentioned the National Survey on Religious Attitudes of Young People (Autumn), I have had the chance to examine it more closely. This survey, which contains a detailed analysis of the opinions of nearly a thousand school children of 14-18 was sponsored by several Evangelical organisations and is published by the Bible Society (£2.50). So it is unlikely to be biased against Christianity, and this makes its findings particularly impressive.

The main conclusion is that only about one-third of children in secondary schools accept the basic doctrines of Christianity, and that boys are much less religious than

girls. Here are the percentages for belief in God:

	Boys	Girls
Definitely	20	33
Vaguely	34	38
Occasionally	28	22
Definitely not	18	6

The replies to more detailed questions about the nature of God show that 43 percent think God is a benevolent force or knowable persons, 42 percent don't know, 8 percent think God is an invention of man and 4 percent think God is an astronaut. The replies to similar questions about the nature of Jesus show that 34 percent think Jesus was God in human form, 31 percent think Jesus was a prophet or good teacher, 12 percent think Jesus was an ordinary man, 5 percent a mad man, 4 percent a bad man and 8 percent a legend. Girls consistently tend to prefer divine and boys consistently prefer human alternatives.

Looking at religious observance, about two-thirds think that neither religious belief nor a spiritual outlook is important in their lives. Looking at interest in or membership of religious groups, about half are interested in and members of Christian groups; 25 percent are interested in non-christian groups, but only 7 percent are members of such groups; and about 40 percent are neither interested in nor members of any religious group. Only 13 percent go to church every week, 44 percent go only occasionally, and 33 percent never go

at all. Girls consistently tend to have more religious commitment as well as belief.

Looking at belief in other religious and pseudoscientific ideas, 19 percent believe in the Devil, 41 percent in ghosts or spirits, 25 percent in reincarnation, 50 percent in Unidentified Flying Objects, and 54 percent in life on other planets (There were no questions about Heaven and Hell, or about telepathy or resurrection.) Girls tend towards belief in religious ideas, boys towards belief in pseudoscientific ideas.

Yet no fewer than 52 percent think God helps people, and 38 percent think God listens to prayers. No fewer than 73 percent say they own a Bible, and 69 percent say they read it; and as many as 51 percent think it is still relevant to life, and as many as 50 percent think it is not out of date.

Looking at moral beliefs, 43 percent think homosexuality is wrong (more boys than girls), but only 18 percent think abortion is wrong and only 13 percent think extramarital sex is wrong (more girls than boys). Even more striking, less than a quarter of those who hold restrictive views attribute them to religious belief.

(There were no questions about contraception, divorce or euthanasia).

Looking at education, it is generally agreed that religion is not taught as well as history or mathematics, and there is an

interesting division of opinion about what should be taught in religious education:

	Agree	Disagree
Only Christianity	14	61
Mainly christianity	35	35
All major religions	43	28
No religions	13	66
Moral education	19	19

This shows strongest support for an ecumenical approach combined with moral education, as advocated by moderate Humanists and progressive Christians. It is a pity that there was no question about whether non-religious ideas should also be included.

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A Rational Upbringing

—By V. N. K. Kumar.

As infants, we are naturally assertive. Your first independent act at birth was to protest against the treatment you were receiving! If something happened which you did not like, you let others know immediately by verbal assertion — whining, crying, or screaming at all hours of the day or night. You were also very persistent. You rarely stopped letting everyone know you were displeased until they did something about it. As soon as you could crawl, you persistently and assertively did what you wanted, whenever you wanted to do it. You crawled into, over, and under anything you wanted to explore. Unless infants are physically restrained or sleeping, they generally create havoc for the people around them. Hence the invention of the crib, playpen and halter, to allow parents freedom to do other things besides worrying about and chasing after their babies.

As you grew older, the control your parents exerted over you changed from physical to the psychological. As soon as you could learn to speak, the word that rolled from your tongue most assertively was an emphatic "No!". You would even give up a favourite treat sometimes to be able to say "No!". While this obstinacy may have driven your mother up the wall, it was only an extension of your

innate assertiveness into the verbal sphere. To psychologically control your behaviour, as soon as you could understand what your parents told you, you were trained to feel anxious, ignorant and guilty.

GUILT FEELING

Once we have learned to feel anxious, or guilty, we will do lot of things to avoid feeling these ways. Our parents train us to feel these negative emotions for two important reasons: First, playing upon our negative emotions is a very efficient way of controlling our natural, annoying, and sometimes explosive childish assertiveness. Second, our parents use this psychological control method because our grandparents taught them to feel anxious, ignorant, and guilty.

Our parents accomplish this emotional training in a very simple way. They teach us ideas and beliefs about ourselves and the ways people behave that produce feelings of anxiety, ignorance, and guilt. For example, place yourself in the shoes of a young child, your own child perhaps, or yourself when you were young, and look at the training you undergo. When you clean up your room and put all the toys away, mother usually says things like: "That's a good boy." When she doesn't like the job you do — if you do it at all — she usually says things that sound like: "What kind of a child are you? Only naughty children don't clean up their room!" She also uses words like bad, terrible, awful, dirty, unmanageable, wicked, evil—but they all describe the same thing: You! what you are: small, helpless, and not knowing much. And what you should feel: dumb, nervous, perhaps frightened, and certainly guilty!

In training you to attach emotionally loaded ideas like 'good' and 'bad' to your minor actions, your mother is denying that she has any responsibility for making you do what *she* wants, like cleaning up your room. The effect upon you as a small child of using such loaded ideas as good, bad, right and wrong, to control what you do is the same *as if* mother had said, "Don't make that sour face at me. It's not *me* who wants you to clean up your room. *God* wants you to clean up your room!"

With external statements like right and wrong that have nothing to do with your interaction with her, she blames your discomfort at doing what *she* wants on to some external authority that made up all the rules we "should" obey. Instead of asserting her wants to an assertive young child until he responds to her wishes (and in time he will), mother finds it easier to make you struggle through bad and good with God, the old man with the white beard, the policeman, or whoever else you childishly perceive as the one who decides what is good and what is bad.

Such manipulative training of learned negative emotions is reinforced and carried on when you are out of the home. Teachers in school pick up where the mother leaves off and use manipulative emotional control as a very efficient means to run their classrooms with less work on their part. These tactics effectively keep us out of real and imagined danger as children and make the lives of the adults around us a lot easier. These emotional strings, however, have an unfortunate side effect. As we grow into adults and are

responsible for our own well-being, they do not magically disappear. We still have feelings of anxiety, ignorance, and guilt that can be and are used efficiently by other people to get us to do what they want, irrespective of what we want for ourselves.

ACQUIRED BELIEFS

Some of the beliefs that we acquire in childhood because of our feelings of anxiety, ignorance and guilt are as follows:

- 1) You should not make independent judgments about yourself and your actions. You must be judged by external rules, procedures, and authority wiser and greater than yourself.
- 2) You have an obligation to institutions greater than yourself which groups of other people have set up to conduct the business of living. You should sacrifice your own values to keep these systems from falling apart (Organised Religion and its rituals is one such institution).
- 3) You must have the goodwill of people you relate to or they can prevent you from doing anything. You need the cooperation of other people to survive. It is very important that people should like you. (When we did things that annoyed adults, to control our behaviour they told us things like: "If you keep that up, the boogie man will get you." The unspoken message was that if we still annoyed them, they won't like us anymore and won't protect us from the boogie man).

- 4) Because of your human condition, you are base and have many flaws. You must try to make up for this humanness by striving to improve. Being human, you will probably fail in this obligation, but you still must want to improve. If an elderly person points out how you can improve yourself, you are really obliged to follow his directions. If you do not, you are lazy, and worthless and therefore unworthy of respect from anyone.

Because of these above cited beliefs, when we are exposed to religion by our parents or outsiders and credulity is taught as a duty, we succumb to the indoctrination. And this gets reinforced later in a special way. Somehow we feel safe and protected as a child under our parents umbrella. Even when we grow up, though we become aware of our greater strengths, we also gain greater insights into the dangers and uncertainties of life, and we feel just as helpless as in childhood in relation to the external world. But by then we would have realized that our parents are beings with strictly limited powers and by no means endowed with every desirable attribute. So we nostalgically look back to the memory image of the over-rated father of our childhood, exalt it into a dicty and bring it into the present reality. So unconsciously we seek a perfect paragon and a father-figure in our God. At this juncture religion becomes an opium.

So the moral of the whole thing appears to be that unless parents have an understanding of the psychogenesis of belief and are willing to suffer some amount of discomfort while bringing up their children,

it would not be possible to bring up potential leaders of our future society. It requires a lot of patience and foregoing of a comfortable life to bring up self-sufficient and balanced personalities. This is a price which we will have to pay.

THE AUTOCRAT

The man who says to me, "Believe as I do, or God will damn you," will soon say, "Believe as I do, or I will kill you."

—Voltaire

* * *

SIMPLE ARITHMETICS

It takes light travelling 186,000 miles a second 450 million years to reach us from some stars. Then the universe must be at least 450 million years old and not 6000 as fixed in the bible.

* * *

BLIND LEADING THE BLIND

Men believe in gods only because other men — just as ignorant as they are — tell them there are gods.

* * *

The Problems of Growing Up

—S. Lakshminarasimhan, Madras

Now-a-days the world is becoming increasingly conscious of children and their rights as evinced by 1979 being celebrated as "The International Year of the Child". Recently Sweden has enacted a law under which parents who beat children can be punished with two weeks imprisonment and fine up to 500 kronas. The issues concerning the rights of the child are now being considered more sensitively by governments of various countries throughout the world. The child is thus coming into his own as an important citizen. But improving the image of the child can be done only by a basic change in the attitude on the part of the parents. The duration of a person's early life can be divided into five integral parts. They are (i) Infancy (ii) early childhood (iii) middle childhood or preadolescence (iv) adolescence and (v) post adolescence.

INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

In infancy the child has no understanding of the nature of his environment, nor what objects are alike. He can discover a good deal by examining closely everything that comes within his reach, putting it in his mouth manipulating it and exploring it with his fingers.

During his first year the child begins to learn something about cause and effect.

In his second year the child begins to use language to help him to understand and come to terms with his surroundings.

In his third, fourth and fifth years as the child begins to know what things are, he becomes increasingly interested in what they do and what he can do with them and use them for. It is then that he starts asking questions like-what's that? What's this for?

Think of all the living species that train their young in the art of survival, the cats who teach their kittens to hunt, the birds who spend such strident effort on teaching their fledglings to fly, yet man, whose tool of survival is the mind, does not merely fail to teach a child to think; but devotes the child's education to the purpose of destroying his brain, of convincing him that thought is futile and evil, before he has started to think.

Every man might have faced as a child, the following questions, asked by his parents: "Don't ask so many questions, children should be seen and not heard!" Or again who are you to think? It's so because I say so,—Don't argue, obey! Don't try to understand, believe! Don't rebel, adjust!—Who are you to know? Your parents know best!"

Parents should not be evasive when a child asks a question but they must give him an honest answer. The child has a right to know! Parents would do well to remember that if the child has no reliable source of information open to him then he will gain his understanding from highly

questionable or damaging sources. On the other hand he may need encouragement, and warmth too. Memories of a gentle kiss, a hug, a word of appreciation of a mother stay afresh in his mind as he grows to an adult. Those memories can placate him when he is in turmoil.

Dr. Dostojvsky says "you must know that there is nothing higher and more wholesome and good for life in the future than some good memory, especially a memory of early childhood; of home.

People talk to you a great deal about your education, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man carries many such memories with him into life, he is safe to the end of his days, and if one has only one good memory left in one's heart, even that may sometime be the means of saving us".

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD AND PREADOLESCENCE

When he first comes to school, the child needs to discover the nature and identity of the features of his new environment. He wants to know what things are, how and why events happen. Thus he requires explanation rather than instruction. He needs the opportunity as he did in infancy and earlier childhood, to work things out for himself by exploration, experimentation, manipulation and construction. Most preadolescent children raised under the influence of our culture do not readily take to efforts made by parents or other adults to discuss serious matters like sex, religion etc. directly. Often they greet such attempts with indifference or even

take affront. This does not really mean that they are uninterested. It is simply evidence of the defensive shell they have been forced to build around themselves by the do's and don'ts of parental instruction that dull a child's mind and always seek to restrict his frontiers of learning.

Most preadolescent children may develop jealousy. At times parents may sow the seeds of jealousy in a child's mind. When they show more affection to one of their children for its better looks intelligence or obedience, the naughty, unintelligent or disobedient child who watches it develops jealousy for the 'preferred child' in its mind. When a child is deprived of what it needs more, then its longing for it increases. He may even begin to hate the parent. Normally a jealous child seeks love, or approval or (atleast) attention. Parents should give him his fair share of recognition when he is not jealous. It is only love, approval and recognition that is appreciated by the child. Vainglorious possessive and competitive parents are themselves insecure; insecurity is passed from parent to child easily like any infectious disease and jealousy is one important way through which insecurity expresses itself in children. Discipline and love must be intertwined in parents' relationship towards their child. If love takes undue preponderance then the ensuing leniency will not be conducive to good bringing up.

When the child of five reaches the age of ten he becomes so articulate that he can actually tell us something directly about himself and about ourselves. Perhaps at this significant transition age of ten near the brink of adolescence, the parents must

begin to take children more completely into their confidence. If a parent moves wisely in this direction he is likely to find the going much easier as his child enters adolescence. Early efforts in the right direction can only result in deeper child-parent relationship where the important problems of adolescence can be discussed in a mutually helpful manner. Thus the parent can help their children to put them so firmly on the path of life that they can face the future bravely and pragmatically.

ADOLESCENCE :

According to Webster's seventh new collegiate Dictionary the meaning of the word 'adolescence' is "the period of life from puberty to maturity terminating legally at the age of majority" So we can take the children of the age group between 12 and 18 in this category. So many changes take place in his body and brain during adolescence. Adolescence may rather be called "the period of exploration". "The changing body and the changing self" is a phrase associated with adolescent development. It suggests that the shaping into mature form of the childhood body pattern is accompanied by new self-concepts. Because adolescents live so much in a world of their own, which they do not share with older people, parents remain uninformed about the way teenagers spend their time, the things that are important to them and the things that friends have in common. Parents especially therefore should be on their guard and should see that the children grow up and develop a healthy and positive attitude. Parents should also not misinform their children about sex. For, the children

may develop an idea that sex is sin and in future it may shun the company of opposite sex. Parents have a duty to see that a child is informed to treat a future relationship with the opposite sex as an experience of mutual affection understanding and dignity. Parents should not scoff their child when he shows interest in the opposite sex, but treat him with dignity and offer helpful guidelines. The most important form of childhood sex knowledge lies in what the child observes concerning the way in which his parents as persons of 'opposite sex behave, towards each other.

The adolescent generally desires some independence and adult status. This may be the source of a major problem for the late-maturer, however, since he is often regarded and treated as a small boy by adults and peers and is not likely to be granted independence as early as physically accelerated boys. Therefore it may be anticipated that adolescents regard adults, particularly their parents, as dominating, forcing them to do things they don't want to or preventing them from doing things they want to do. Moreover, the parental treatment these boys experience and parental refusal to grant them independent status may be interpreted as personal rejection. These feelings of being dominated and rejected may result in attitudes of rebellion against the family and in feelings of hostility.

POST ADOLESCENCE :

By the time he reaches the age of 18 he might have taken a decision about his future. He might have set a goal to reach. All that the parents can do now is to sit tight and watch-watch their child advance

in his life and enjoy the fruition of their earlier efforts and sacrifices.

Governments may come and Governments may go. They may legislate new constitutional and legal rights for children. But children are unaware of their rights and they have no means of enforcing these rights. Everything is with the parents. Children are the consequences of the pleasures the parents had. Hence it is the bounden duty of the parents to see that their children are happy in enjoying their rights.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PARENTS :

Do's

When your child wants to say something patiently hear what he says.

Do appreciate your child for his thinking ability.

Do help him to feel a sense of achievement.

Do encourage the child to discuss things freely with you.

Do encourage the child to ask questions on any subjects whenever he has a doubt and be equipped to answer

Do give him an honest answer when he asks questions

Show by your actions and reactions that no subject is trivial or taboo

Finally, do trust your child implicitly and pry less.

Don'ts

Don't beat or scoff your child when he does something naughty. Tell him mildly why he should not do it.

Don't try to solve any of a child's problems yourself. First ask him to find out a solution himself. Encourage him to try hard. When he expresses his inability then help him to solve it. The child's solution of cognitive problems depends on the one hand on the nature of the particular problem and on the other hand on his own intellectual equipment.

Don't threaten your child like "if you do this you'll be fried in hell"! "if you do this you'll be punished for it!" It's a grave mistake that many parents impose their wrong conceptions into the minds of their children and as he grows to an adult he finds it extremely difficult to parry these ideas and think without bias.

Don't press your child for a reply when he doesn't want to give one. The more you press for a reply he will try to escape by lying.

Don't show any visible shock to anything, the child may say controversial. Don't compare your children with those of your neighbours or relatives. You may rather be sowing seeds of inferiority complex than raising their sprightliness. Don't interfere when they scuttle; your interference may rankle them.

Don't recriminate if your child is irascible. You can amortize his irascibility through your excruciating patience.

Don't confuse your child with groundless premonitions.

Don't use force to change your recalcitrant child, into a pliable one. Events will teach him the wisdom of a mellower approach.

A VEILED PRAYER!

[A young muslim girl aspires to wear colourful clothes like other neighbouring children. But is she condemned to the life of a pardanashin?]

The world is amused seeing me mysteriously veiled
But my people have deemed I ought to be concealed
When I was a child I'd played with friends outdoor
A pardanashin can't think of it any more!

Not long ago once I did dare
To go without the veil, to the village fair
There I was admonished to conform to religion
Back to my home I came, a caged pigeon!

How I wish I bare the face and reveal my good looks :
But this I'm told is anathema to our holy books
How I wish I could show my lovely face
And walk in the streets oozing feminine grace!

One day I heard they're to make me a bride
I knew I'd to go away and so I cried
Will I remain to a veiled existence ever tied?
Or will my man show me the whole world wide?

To such a man I will all my affections pour
Who likes me to live like the girl next door
An' allows me to wear all the dresses I'd seen
Give me the jewels that I'll wear like a queen!

Who would'nt claim it as his unique 'huq',
The right to cast me off and say 'talaq',
But partakes as an equal my joys and sorrows
To greet me on my birthdays and offer me a rose

To such a man, may I for ever be tied
Whom I can call 'my man' with pride
Who would respect my views with an open mind
O Lord! Grant me a man of such kind.

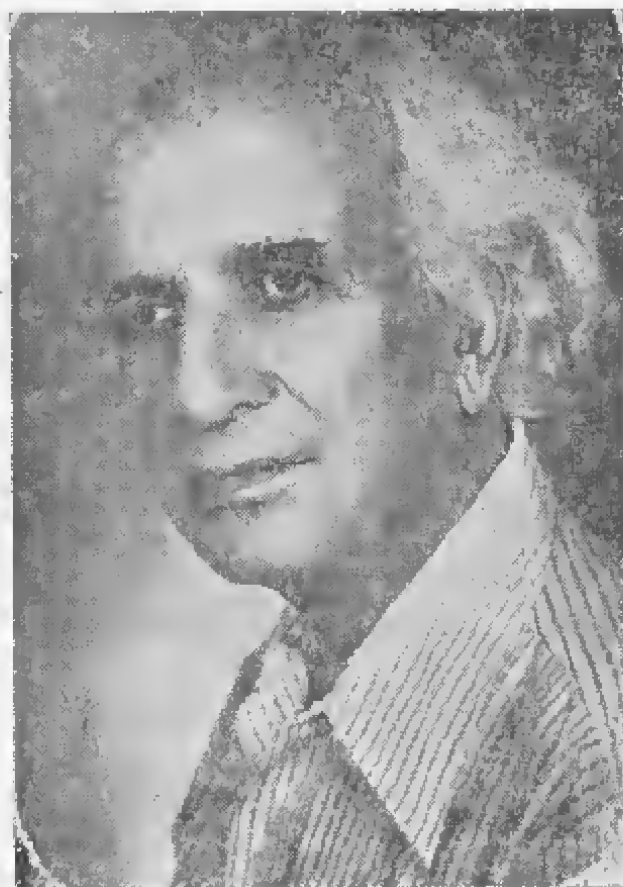
— V. GOPALAKRISHNAN

An Interview with Mr. Prem Nath Bazaz

C. A. Seshadri Madras

A rationalist of great repute and a versatile writer, Mr. Premnath Bazaz was born on 13th July 1905 in a pandit family of Kashmir. Graduating in philosophy from Punjab

with himself becoming a supervisor of a Women's Welfare Trust Girls' School, 'Seva Sadan'. He started adult women's classes and encouraged widow remarriage.



MR. PREM NATH BAZAZ

University, he entered public life early in 1930. Initially, his interest in philosophy, history and politics found consummation in reformist actions. As could be anticipated, women's education was his maiden mission

From 1932 he actively worked with Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir. When the Muslim Conference was formed, the secularist in Mr. Bazaz made him revolt against the very idea. In 1939 when the Muslim Conference

was converted into the National Conference, Mr. Bazaz joined as a member of its working committee and treasurer. However, he was disappointed at the communalism of the National Conference and decided to part company in 1941.

MUSLIM KASHMIR :

His objectivity, as against blind patriotic passion, could be gauged from the fact that he felt that Kashmir with 96% Muslim population could not be expected to join India. He felt that having accepted partition, Kashmir was bound to be a sore point in the relations between India and Pakistan. For voicing his views he was imprisoned between 1947 and 1950. In 1950 he was expelled from Kashmir and Delhi gained what Kashmir lost. To make his opinions known, he started a monthly called 'Voice of Kashmir' in 1955. But the Government machinery could not tolerate a dissenter who was more knowledgeable and objective than the Government's representatives. They detained him once again during 1956 and 1957, thus putting an end to his monthly publication.

WRITER :

But Bazaz was not to be silenced. He is a prolific writer in English and Urdu. His journalistic ability in Urdu found an early outlet when he edited the Urdu daily HAMDARD from 1935 to 1947. He has published 11 books and 56 pamphlets apart from his innumerable contributions to Radical Humanist, Times of India, Swaraj and other magazines and newspapers.

EVOLUTION OF A RATIONALIST :

In a retrospective mood, he was narrating how he started giving up one prejudice after another. Born in a pandit (brahmin) family, between 1940 and 1945 he became an agnostic. His critical analysis of the Gita occupied his mind for nearly 20 years upto 1965. However, he could not bring himself to writing his factual analysis on the Gita. Ultimately he published his magnum opus, namely, the 'Role of Bhagvad Gita in Indian History' in the year 1975. He wanted to write on the Gita because it was being glorified as the most holy of holy books. Having written on 'Secular Morality,' now he wishes

to publish his thoughts on 'destiny of human kind'.

He first met MN Roy in 1938. He was a regular reader of 'Independent India' and was in broad agreement with Royism on economics, politics and religion as being out-spoken, consistently atheistic and having only a human interest as its ultimate goal. To him, humanism, rationalism and atheism are synonymous. Agnosticism as he put it, is an intervening period. Rationalists of all hues are brothers he declared. He concedes that communism has contributed to the destruction of religion to a large extent. As for the future, he feels that, unlike the past, with scientific education well developed, atheism will be the rule rather than an exception. The split personality of being a scientist in laboratory and a superstitious believer in houses and temples will come to an end.

POLITICS :

He lost faith in Gandhi and Nehru on their rejection of Cripps' proposal. An admirer of communism, he believes in taking interest in politics but not in capturing power. He believes that the difference between a communist and a nationalist is very negligible. Communists try to change autocratically, he complained. He 'profoundly' disagreed with citizens for democracy' as well in political thinking. Though he was for awakening the people, he found J.P. to be 'irrational and confused'. Practically he has been out of politics since the 1950's as he felt that to be in politics one would have to be irrational and cater to the prejudices of common man.

DEMOCRAT :

He has been consistently advocating democracy in politics. He condemned monarchy as well as power politics. The hunger for power has disgusted him invariably. He advocates an open mind and his zeal for individual's freedom of the modern kind is so all-pervading. He considers freedom of opinion as supreme. As he put it, human, spiritual and intellectual freedoms are imperatives to making life meaningful. It is the lack of intellectual freedom that impelled him to write the book 'Secular Morality' published in U. S. A. (reviewed in May 1970 issue of FREETHOUGHT). But he is only too well

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A Letter to God

—Ms. S. V. Vasundhara

(The following is an imaginary letter from a school girl to God. Ed.)

Dear Mr. God,

Let me first introduce myself as a student of VIII standard in a local Girls' School. As they say you are omniscient, you may be already knowing me.

You may wonder how I know you. Oh! My grand mother daily tells me about you—so many things about you. My mummy and daddy also occasionally tell me about you. I read about you in my school books. I heard many people talking about you. Though I have seen your pictures and idols I am yet to see you.

Frankly speaking I have not been able to understand many things about you. If you can pardon me, there were many occasions when I hated you and there were other occasions when I doubted your very existence.

They say you answer our prayers. Prayer has become a part of my daily chores but on none of the days these were answered. I thought you would atleast have the etiquette to reply to letters. Hence this letter.

Would you mind answering my following doubts?

1. What is your actual name?
2. Do you have any children? If so how many?
3. Upto what class you have studied? Where did you do your schooling?
4. How do you spend your time?
5. They say you control the nature. Then why do you create the cyclones, floods and kill lots of people? Do you find pleasure in it?
6. Why did you create the schools and text books? If only you had created children like me with all the knowledge contained in the books and something more, we could have avoided the schooling and saved many valuable years which we could have enjoyed instead of troubling ourselves with our school and examinations. You see the point?

7. Why did you make ice cream, coffees, chocolates, etc so scarce. We children just can't afford them, you know. Suppose once in a week there is a rain of lollies and chocolates. How wonderful it would be!

8. Mummy kills me with household work. For instance if the clothes don't get dirty at all? Then there will be no need to wash them?

9. Now, Daddy finds it hard to meet my requirements. I want new clothes atleast once a week. I want to see places I want to see movies I want so many things. Daddy says he has no money for any of these. Why didn't you give every one enough wealth?

10. My grand mother has always some illness or the other. Is it not possible for you to keep all people absolutely healthy? If you can't, what other control can you have on us?

11. The other day two small kids - very small kids - were run over by a bus. One died on the spot. The other became a cripple. I just can't imagine why you have chosen to do it.

12. I have seen many people calling you in different names. I don't mind for that but they kill each other - Is it not silly? See, my youngest brother - he calls my daddy as 'papa' I have not killed him.

13. They say you are most benevolent. The other day in the examination I completely forgot the answers for a few questions. I requested you to come to my rescue. You didn't. You know what shabby marks I got and what nasty scolding from my daddy. You will know if you have a daddy.

14. I also feel that you didn't take enough care while creating man. Why didn't you provide strong wings for human beings to enable them to fly at jet speed? Many things like that.

My god! I am writing this letter alright, but to what address I have to send it? No one knows your correct address. I don't find your name in the Telephone Directory too.

They say you are all pervading. I will keep my letter on my table. Please keep your reply on it by tomorrow morning. Hope you will do it.

Yours truly,
—Meena

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aware of the circumstances in India and that his ideas on freedom are confined to only a few even amongst the educated. His democracy may be a few hundred years in coming. But he would rather wait than capture power and bring about changes autocratically. Nothing is dearest to him than freedom of the individual.

ECONOMICS :

His political utopia would be a functional democracy like in Yugoslavia. In economic matters he believes in co-operatives to produce goods. People should themselves attend to all matters with the Government only guiding them. Though industrialisation is a 'must', Mr. Bazaz believes that the smaller ones are more suited to an agricultural country like India as this will solve the unemployment problem as well. Though he is not against public sector (against which he levelled the charge of mis-management), he was for encouraging private sector enterprises as well without permitting any exploitation of labour (perhaps, a contradiction in terms).

However, he appeared without much hopes when he said "things look dismal as leaders are without vision, power hungry and self-centred. We must create a band of people who are sincerely devoted to the cause of the common man, who are honest and unwilling to take power but rather critical of the Government in the interest of the man in the street. The intellectuals of this country must come out of their shelters and constructively criticise the Government." He sounded pessimistic again when he found the co-operative sector making only a minimal contribution to the country's progress. One could not help feeling that here is a person who is trying to combine the greatest amount of individual freedom with the largest good of the largest number. Mr. Bazaz is all for each individual thinking for himself to elevate himself but without the freedom to exploit or suppress other individuals.

FREETHOUGHT :

Being an author himself, Mr. Bazaz's views on your magazine are of great interest to us. Though he likes FREETHOUGHT for its consistent atheism, he would like articles meant for intellectuals included in it so that we could convert the 'educated-ignorant' people of our country

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decide children's future and if the best minds man the most responsible positions — in short, if we change our social and economic system, then we may not only bring prosperity and happiness on earth but also learn to use nature (including the other planets — and stars?) to our advantage. It is co-operative effort and responsibility that will bring happiness and prosperity and not unbounded selfishness and unscrupulous competition. Instead of indoctrinating children on religion and individual salvation, let the elders teach them collective living and social well-being.



MR. S. GANESAN—(1917-1979)

Mr. Ganesan, the beloved artist of FREETHOUGHT readers passed away on 27th June, 1979. A leader in the Railway Union, he was actively associated with Periyar E. V. R. both as a devoted worker of D.K. as well as Editor of Tamil magazines, 'Truth', 'Liberation' and 'Battlesword'. He was instrumental in starting the railway pensioners' association and the Creator's Forum last year. He was always willing to give a helping hand to every rationalist cause unmindful of personal and financial inconvenience. His many paintings, cartoons and caricatures, works of art and writings in Tamil and English would ever remind us of this gentle rationalist. 'FREETHOUGHT' mourns his loss.

Letters . . .

Sir,

Why in India as well as abroad, the temples, churches, mosques and the like are becoming richer and richer and becoming more and more popular?

To start with, most men's faith is bent towards them. Somehow or the other they save a portion of their income in the name of their beloved God. They send their savings to that particular God through some agency, whenever they find it convenient and satisfactory. If not, the same family will pay a visit to that particular sacred place. I certainly believe 99% of the existing population is contributing in this way for the betterment of these temples, churches, mosques and this is how these sacred places are becoming richer and richer every day.

But, to a rationalist, especially to me, it is heartening to imagine the position of a sacred temple like the Indian Rationalist Association. I have firm faith in Rationalism. I no more tolerate to see the association in such a poor condition. It is my aim that rationalism should spread far and wide. The position of the present magazine FREETHOUGHT should be improved both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Hence in the noble cause of Rationalism, I, like a common man, made up my mind to save every month and send it to the Association. Our Rationalism is a new type of Religion and it should spread like wild fire superseding all other religions. With this ennobling spirit and firm faith in Rationalism, I am herewith sending my tiny contribution of Rs. 15 by M.O. to the association and I will be sending the same way every month without fail all my savings. If everybody who believes in Rationalism were to save and contribute, our association will establish a very good name in the entire world and then our nation find the path of all-round progress.

— M. Sridharbabu, Karnataka.

Sir,

My sons L. Sanjay, VI std. and L. Shyamal, II std. will henceforth be known as Sanjay LARAISON and Shyamal LARAISON, Laraison being the family name I have adopted for my children and Sanjay and Shyamal being their first names or given names.

I have thought of adopting a family name because the custom of prefixing the initial letter of the father's name followed in my family hitherto (as in many South Indian families) does not conform to the international pattern of naming or any recognised standard pattern.

The name LARAISON, pronounced (la: reizon) may sound odd to you but I am sure you will all get used to it. The name is in fact a French word meaning "Reason." My concern was to choose a name that is not indicative of caste or creed.

H. Lakshminarayana, Bangalore.

'GOD' BADE HIM TO KILL!

An Anglican priest, Rev. Mathew Peiris, the former vicar of the St. Paul the Apostle Church, was arrested in Colombo on charges of conspiring to murder his wife and a man who was staying at the vicarage, according to the Colombo police.

Both Mrs. Eunice Lois Peiris, 59, who died in March, and Russel Ingram, 33, who died in August, were in lengthy comas before their deaths.

Guru-Sishya No. 8



CATCH THEM YOUNG!

IRA ENDOWMENT FUND

As one who had paid 5% of his net annual income last year, Mr. Y. A. Lokhandwala, the President, IRA has this year also donated Rs. 1,300 towards IRA Endowment Fund.

Hope this would inspire the members and the Readers to donate atleast 2% of their net annual income to the IRA Endowment Fund as fervently appealed by the President last year.